

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7142

INFO AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY BANGUI

AMCONGEN CAPETOWN

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USUN NEW YORK 326

AMEMBASS YAOUNDE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABIDJAN 1606

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CAPETOWN PASS EMBASSY

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IV, AO

SUB: FUTHER BACKGROUND ON IVORY COAST RECOGNITION OF
MPLA--TALK WITH FOREIGN MINISTER

REFERENCE ABIDJAN 1527

1. SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTER CONFIRMED THAT GOIC'S ACTION IN RECOGNITION OF MPLA CAME AS RESULT OF INABILITY OF USG TO LIVE UP TO ITS DECLARED INTENTION OF OFFSETTING SOVIET/CUBAN STRENGTH IN ANGOLA. ANGOLAN DEFEAT REPRESENTED SET-BACK FOR U.S. AND FOR AFRICAN MODERATES, AND TREMENDOUS VICTORY FOR SOVIETS, WITH WORRISOME IMPLICATIONS FOR ZAIRE, ZAMBIA, NAMIBIA AND REST OF AFRICA. GOIC IS RETHINKING ITS OWN POSITION TOWARD SOVIEWS, SEES NO PROSPECT OF DISLODGING THEM AND CUBANS FROM ANGOLA. USHER WOULD NEVERTHELESS WELCOME KISSINGER VISIT TO AFRICA AS DEMONSTRATION THAT USG CONTINUES TO CARE KBOUT WHAT HAPPENS ON THIS CONTINENT. EMBASSY BELIEVES ANGLOAN AFFAIR MAY LEAD GOIC TO EARLY RESUMPTION OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH USSR.

2. AMBASSADOR CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISTER ARSENE USHER ASSOUAN ON FEBRUARY 17 TO DISCUSS BASIS FOR GOIC'S ANNOUNC-
EMENT FEBRUARY 12 OF RECOGNITION OF MPLA AS GOVERNMENT OF PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF ANGOLA.

3. USHER WENT RIGHT TO THE POINT. GOIC HAD HAD TO RETHINK ITS POSITION IN LIGHT OF FAILURE OF WEST IN GENERAL AND USG IN PARTICULAR TO MAINTAIN SUPPORT TO FNLA/UNITA AND TO EXPAND IT TO LEVEL ESSENTIAL TO OFFSET SOVIET/CUBAN SUPPORT TO MPLA. THIS WAS GRAVE DISAPPOINTMENT TO GOIC AND TO OTHER MODERATES, PARTICULARLY AFTER "FOR THE FIRST TIME" (AND HE STRESSED THIS) MODERATES HAD STOOD TOGETHER SO FIRMLY IN ADDIS. USHER SAID IT IS NO LONGER POSSIBLE IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL MATTERS TO COUNT ON THE DECLARED INTENTION OF THE USG TO UNDER
-TAKE AN ACTION, SINCE IT CAN SUBSEQUENTLY BE REVERSED BY ACTION OF U.S. CONGRESS.

4. USHER, CLEARLY SPEAKING FOR PRESIDENT HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY,
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SAID THAT ANGOLAN SITUATION HAD GRAVE CONSEQUENCES FOR FUTURE OF AFRICA. THE SOVIET/CUBAN FOOTHOLD THREATENED TO SPREAD QUICKLY TO ZAIRE AND ZAMBIA. OF EVEN GREATER CONSEQUENCE WAS THE REAL POSSIBILITY THAT CUBAN TROOPS WOULD ADVANCE TOWARD AND INTO NAMIBIA, ENGAGE SOUTH AFRICAN TROOPS AND HAVE THE ARDENT SUPPORT OF PARACTICALLY ALL THE REST OF AFRICAN (AND MUCH OF THE REST OF THE WORLD) FOR AN ACTION TO FREE NAMIBIA FROM ITS WHITE COLONIAL YOKE. ANYWESTERN COUNTER SUPPORT FOR SOUTH AFRICA WOULD CLEARLY BE UNWELCOME.

5. USHER ADDED OMINOUSLY THAT IN VIEW OF ALL THESE DEVELOPMENTS, GOIC WAS REASSESSING ITS ATTITUDE TOWARD USSR. THE CLEAR IMPLICATION WAS THAT RESUMPTION OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH USSR MIGHT BE IN THE OFFING. (NOTE: GOIC BROKE WITH USSR IN 1969 OVER ALLEGED SOVIET ACTIVITY IN STIRRING UP IVORIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND, ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN MUCH TALK OF RESUMING RELATIONS, IT KEEPS BEING POSTPONED BECAUSE OF HOUPHOUET'S FUNDMENTAL MISTRUST OF COMMUNISTS.)

6. I ASKED USHER WHETHER THERE HAD BEEN MUCH COORDINATION AMONG MODERATES BEFORE GOIC TOOK ITS DECISION TO RECOGNIZE MPLA. HE MADE CLEAR THAT THERE HAD, NOTING THAT WITHIN TWO DAYS OF GOIC ACTION, MOST OF OTHER MODERATES HAD FOLLOWED SUIT.

7. I ASKED WHETHER GOIC HOPED NOW TO BE ABLE TO INFLUENCE MPLA TO REDUCE SOVIET/CUBAN PRESENCE IN ANGOLA. HE SAW LITTLE CHANCE OF THAT. MPLA HAD WON A TREMENDOUS VICTORY, WHICH IT WOULD WANT TO CONSOLIDATE. SOVIETS HAD ALSO HAD THEIR FIRST REAL SUCCESS IN AFRICA AND HAD ABSOLUTELY NO INCENTIVE TO LEAVE, WHAT WITH THE OTHER EXCITING PROSPECT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA.

8. USHER CAME BACK TO QUESTION OF WHAT UNITED STATES' FUTURE ROLE WOULD BE IN ALL OF THIS, PARTICULARLY IN THIS ELECTION YEAR. HE SAW LITTLE HOPE OF A POSITIVE, MEANINGFUL USG STANCE. NEVERTHELESS, HE STILL HOPED THAT SECRETARY KISSINGER WOULD VISIT AFRICA (AND, OF COURSE, IVORY COAST). DESPITE WHAT HE HAD SAID ABOUT USG'S WORD HAVING TO BE CONFIRMED BY CONGRESSIONAL ACTION, HE BELIEVES UNITED STATES STANDS AS IMPORTANT POWER IN AFRICAN EYES AND AFRICANS NEED ASSURANCES--WHICH THEY HAVE NOT HAD RECENTLY--THAT UNITED STATES IS GENUINELY INTER-CONFIDENTIAL
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ESTED IN POLITICAL ASPECTS OF AFRICA'S FUTURE.

9. COMMENT: USHER'S MESSAGE WAS ESSENTIALLY THE SAME AS ONE HE AND PRESIDENT HOUPHOUET HAVE BEEN EXPRESSING TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY SCHAUFELLE AND TO ME OVER PAST COUPLE OF MONTHS, NAMELY, THAT U.S. PUT IN TOO LITTLE AND TOO LATE, AND THEREFORE IVORY COAST HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO RECOGNIZE MPLA. IN ADDITION, HOWEVER, HE LEFT ME WITH FEELING THAT TIMING OF GOIC'S DECISION TO RECOGNIZE MPLA WAS ESSENTIALLY "A BANDWAGON" MOVE; FOR ONCE, IVORY COAST WOULD NOT BE THE LAST TO JOIN (AS IT HAD OVER ISRAEL IN 1973). FURTHERMORE, HE WAS OBVIOUSLY DEPRESSED OVER "DEFEAT" OF MODERATES ON THIS ISSUE. AND, FINALLY, HE STRONGLY IMPLIED THAT GOIC MIGHT HAVE TO SHIFT ITS STANCE ON USSR. THIS POT WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED, THEREFORE, TO SEE IVORY COAST RESUME DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH USSR IN RELATIVELY NEAR FUTURE, AS A DIRECT CONSEQUENCE OF SOVIET "VICTORY" IN ANGOLA IN FACT OF WEST'S INADEQUATE RESPONSE. SUCH ACTION WOULD NOT BE IN PIQUE BUT IN FEAR OF

ISOLATION. IT IS ALSO EASY TO CONCEIVE OF THIS LEADING AS
WELL TO DIPOLMATIC RELATIONS WITH PRC AS OFFSET TO SOVIETS.
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